

minutes. I will use the 10 minutes, but I may need to ask for some additional time if it works out and others are not waiting.

FISCAL STABILITY

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I come to the floor deeply disappointed—like many—over our failure to seize a unique opportunity to put America on a more fiscally sane path for the future.

My No. 1 priority for this year—I have talked about it so many times, not only publicly but with colleagues in discussions for nearly a year—that No. 1 priority has been to advocate for a deficit reduction package that would be deemed credible by the financial markets and would put us on a path to fiscal stability. I think, given the situation that exists around the world today, nothing could have been more impactful in a positive way producing such a package.

Financial experts agree—and they have now for years—that we are on the wrong path, that we are spending far too much in relationship to our anemic growth and GDP, and that we have staggered along for 3 years but continued to spend an extraordinary amount of money without seeing the economy recover.

A number of plans have come forward. One year ago today, Simpson-Bowles produced one of those types of bold plans that could help get us back on this fiscal path to prosperity. As you know, Mr. Bowles was the Chief of Staff to our former President Bill Clinton. He and our former colleague Alan Simpson put together a package that—whether you agreed with all of it or not, certainly was something that could have put us on a more fiscally sound path. Yet those recommendations were rejected out of hand by the White House and others.

We have seen the activities and presentations of the Gang of 6. Forty-plus Senators, including me, came together in a bipartisan way to urge the President to join us in pushing for a bold, comprehensive plan. That was rejected. Earlier in the year, the President's budget was laughed out of this Chamber. Not one person—either Democrat or Republican—voted for it.

Then in August we came far short of what we needed to do to address our debt crisis when Congress passed the Budget Control Act. I was not able to support that particular plan. Although it averted a default on our debt, it fell woefully short of what was needed to address our fiscal situation. Nevertheless, that opportunity—which we had with the involvement of both parties to do something truly significant—was passed over.

So then it fell to the committee of 12, which is called the supercommittee. Many of us—offered suggestions and urged those members to try and go beyond the minimum of \$1.2 trillion of deficit reduction over a 10-year period of time.

There was a so-called Draconian sequester, or across-the-board cut, that would go into place automatically, starting in 2013, if the committee could not come to an agreement. The consensus at the time was these cuts would be so Draconian that it would force an agreement among Republicans and Democrats—to come forward with at least a minimal plan. Many of us were urging them to do much more, to bring forth something that would be credible with the investment community and restore confidence that America understood the dire situation we were in and we were doing something about it as representatives of the people.

No clearer message came to this body than the message sent in November of 2010 with the historic turnover of Members and an outpouring of support for putting the future of our country, our fiscal future and economic future and the future of our children and grandchildren ahead of politics. Yet it is politics that defeated the effort.

Now, it is easy to blame the committee of 12. I know there was an earnest attempt to come together. I believe, politically, perhaps, it was doomed from the start just by the way it was designed. That is one of the reasons I voted against that proposal. Nevertheless, they made an earnest attempt but, unfortunately, were not able to bring it home.

So the responsibility falls not just on those 12, but it falls on this entire Congress because we would not even have gotten to that supercommittee if we had done our job earlier and presented a real plan in August, when we were bumping up against the debt limit extension. That's when we should have done what most of us intuitively understand needs to be done. Yet the political considerations and ramifications were such that we came forward with a very timid and woefully short plan of what we needed to do.

The President has to take some responsibility. We cannot really bring forward a bold change in the way the U.S. Government does business unless we have bipartisan support. We cannot get that bipartisan support unless the Chief Executive, the quarterback of the team, stands up and says: I want to be involved and engaged and stay engaged. While there was some rhetoric coming out of the White House, there was no plan. As I said, the only plan we have had from the President—his budget plan—was rejected earlier this year on a unanimous vote, every Republican and every Democrat turned it down.

The President has said some nice words about what we needed to do and so forth and so on. But he was AWOL. As I said, the quarterback of the team needs to be engaged. He is the key person. Yet that quarterback was not even on the field. So responsibility falls on both Congress and the White House. I think some responsibility also falls on outside groups who distorted what we were trying to do, who mischarac-

terized what Republicans were seeking to accomplish, and there was some mischaracterization of what Democrats were seeking to accomplish as well. But it was an undermining process. Those groups that supposedly are representative of seniors across this country, the shameful way in which they distorted the message and what we were trying to do—and, obviously, it had a political impact here and put restraint on Members because their base was being lied to in terms of what was under consideration and what we were trying to do.

We all know Social Security and Medicare are not going to have the funds available in the future to provide the services that were promised to the American people. Yet any attempt to try to salvage and save and retain those programs' solvency was distorted by these groups that supposedly represent the interests of our seniors. Many of these groups falsely claimed that we were trying to take away their program, we were trying to destroy their program.

I mean, how ridiculous it is that someone is going to come in here and say: My goal is to destroy retirement benefits for the American people or I am here to take away health benefits for American retirees. None of us are here to do that.

These programs are law. They are in place. We want them to be more efficient, more effective, but, more importantly, we want them to remain solvent. Yet outside groups were basically sending just the opposite messages. So the Congress failed. We came up short. But having done so, Congress cannot avoid the responsibility we have to do everything in our power to try to address a very serious fiscal problem that exists in this country.

Years and years, decades and decades, not only this Congress but former Congresses, not only this President but former Presidents have made promises to the American people that we now are unable to keep because we do not have the fiscal capability of doing so. We have not had a budget come out of the Congress in more than 1,000 days. There is some indication that we will have a budget next year. I sincerely hope we can get together and come forward with a deficit reduction budget, one that recognizes the fiscal plight in which we find ourselves. I will work with both sides of the aisle to try to accomplish that. We have to acknowledge that we continue to spend trillions more dollars than we have available to us. No nation can sustain that.

All we have to do is look across the Atlantic at what is taking place in Europe from country to country. It is not just Greece, it is not just Portugal, it is not just Ireland anymore. It is Italy and maybe France and maybe other countries. The European Union is struggling to try to address this serious debt crisis, the same type of problem we have here.

There have been many here that look at Europe and say: They need to get

their act together. Well, we need to get our act together here because what we are seeing there may be coming across the shore. Certainly, similar problems exist: promising more than we can deliver, borrowing more so that we can pay debts that we do not have the money to pay through the revenues we generate in our country. The same thing is happening here.

This is the challenge in front of us. We need to find a way to seize this opportunity to do something for the future of this country. Our generation must step up for the next generations and for the sake of the country's future. We need to continue this debate and go forward. It is easy to sit around and grumble and blame somebody else and say, well, we gave it our best shot and therefore we will just let whatever happens happen. We do not want to do that because what will happen here, if we continue on the current course, is what is happening in Europe today. There is no clearer picture of the consequences of a sovereign nation promising more and spending more than it takes in over time. It slows the economy. It piles up the interest payments. It shrinks the amount of money available for essential services. It puts the programs that were in place in real jeopardy.

So if we consider the consequences, we clearly have to answer the question: Where do we go from here? How do we go forward in a constructive way?

I would suggest a few things: First, we need to enforce the law that is there under the Budget Control Act. The law that is in place on the books now, even though I believe that law designed a process that is woefully short of where we need to go, but we need to enforce it now.

No one wanted to get to this across-the-board cutting, this sequester that impacts our national security and other functions of government. But that sequester was supposed to prevent us from failing and urge us to come to agreement. It did not. The sequestration rule now is the law, and I think an attempt to undo that is one of the most cynical things we can do, and the American people know it. I do not believe they will allow us to do it.

So the law needs to be enforced if we cannot come up with the minimum amount of cuts required. We need to go forward and do that. So there are a number of ways—and I commend the committee for at least trying to come up with some efficiencies and effectiveness rein in our Federal spending. I believe they have a list of things that we can look to in order to enforce more cuts. I have suggested a triage process when we review every aspect of an agency of government, every function that is performed through this Federal Government, and basically say: We have a patient that is sick, a patient with a potentially terminal disease. But we need to triage. We have a bunch of people in the waiting room. Some of them need attention right away. So we

need a triage of every agency, every function, every expenditure being examined from the standpoint of, is this absolutely essential to the future of this country, to the protection of our citizens? Is this an absolutely essential function of government that cannot be done at the State level, at the local level, or at the private level? If so, then that needs to have priority.

Secondly, there is a whole range of issues. We come down every day with new ideas and thoughts of “this would be nice to do, but we cannot afford to do.” We have to delay these initiatives those or just simply say to people: I am sorry, we do not have the money to pay for this idea.

So we separate the essential from “like to do and cannot do,” and then we look at what needs to be done that someone else can do better. Whether in the private sector, at the State level, or at the local level, there are a whole range of areas where the Federal Government has gotten in way over its head. These are functions that can take place in the private sector or through State and local governments.

We can look at the duplication and inefficiencies that exist. Senator COBURN came up with a long list, trillions of dollars in expenditures that could be saved. We ought to look at that. We ought to look at those and decide which ones we want to go forward with and how we can start that process.

Let me mention a couple of things: 18 separate domestic food assistance programs. Do we need domestic assistance for food? Probably there are some areas where we do. Do we need 18 separate programs dolling this out?

There are 47 different job training programs. OK. The economy is restructuring. We need job training. Do we need 47 separate programs to do that?

And my personal favorite: 56 financial literacy programs. We can argue that the Federal Government is in no place to teach the American people how to be financially literate. I think what we need to do is be financially literate here in Washington and then use that model to show people how to be literate rather than simply say, well, we have the answer. We, obviously, do not have the answer. Why we have 56 financial literacy programs in place through the Federal Government is just astounding.

So these are suggestions. There are many others regarding cutting of spending. But there are other functions that need to be addressed. There are three major categories. One is regulatory reform. Regulation from various agencies is costing the American taxpayer and Americans millions and billions of dollars.

There is a process underway to look at those. That is one category. I can talk for a long time about that, but I will not. A second one is entitlement reform. Now, I have been talking about this subject from the beginning. This is the engine that drives the train of defi-

cits, and we can stand by and continue to lie to the American people and say they have nothing to worry about. We can say we are going to preserve every penny of the Social Security and every penny of the Medicare and Medicaid, and it will always be there. Do not worry. Even the money put in via payroll taxes and so forth, it is all sacrosanct, and do not worry about it. We can continue that lie or we can tell the American people the truth; that is, if we want to keep these programs viable, we need to take structured reform measures now.

Those could be increasing the age of eligibility for Medicare to coincide with the current Social Security age. It could be changes in some of the indexes that are used to calculate the cost-of-living adjustment. That could be modified through means testing.

Warren Buffett says he does not need Social Security. Fine. If people do not need Social Security or Medicare or at least the full payment, let's give them back what they paid in. So we could put means testing in there. We need to debate and talk about this issue.

Is it politically sensitive? Sure. But let's be honest with the American people. They want us to be honest. I think that is what the message of 2010 was all about.

The third category, one in which I have been very involved in, is reforming our Tax Code, which is a mess.

The tax code is totally incomprehensible to anybody who spends less than 15 hours a day as a career studying it and trying to figure it out. Our tax code is a nightmare. Americans spend billions of dollars having people do their taxes because the tax code is too complex to understand. There are tens of thousands of pages in the Tax Code.

There is a growing bipartisan consensus here in Congress that we need to reform our Tax Code. Senator WYDEN and I have a bipartisan bill that has been worked on for 3 years to reform the tax code. Our plan is not the absolute answer to everything, but it is the only bipartisan bill in legislative text, it has been scored, and it is available to be debated. I know the supercommittee looked at our proposal. The Ways and Means Committee and the Finance Committee ought to look at it as well. Tax reform can, make this country more competitive, grow economy, and help with our fiscal situation.

I sense that I am close to or running out of time. In deference to my colleagues, I will wrap up.

I came here deeply disappointed today. I remain disappointed that we haven't been able to do more. My No. 1 priority has been to advocate for going big on a deficit reduction plan. We weren't able to do that. Experts agree that we must do more. We only have to look at Europe to see what is coming next. Let's try to avoid that. There are plans out there we can build off of right now. So instead of just folding our tent and saying there is nothing we

can do except wait for the election results of 2012 when we may have a different President or a different Congress, we have a responsibility to act now. There are ways we can do this. We need to demonstrate to ourselves and to the American people that we will accept this responsibility. I choose to do that. I choose to take the tough medicine for the future of the country. I believe the American people choose to do that as well.

I urge my colleagues to join me as we move forward. Let's not sit and wait for election results. Let's do something now because the urgency and the crisis is real, and it needs to be addressed now. Let's be responsible and step up and do it.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO LARRY MUNSON

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I rise today, along with my colleague, my fellow University of Georgia graduate, Senator ISAKSON, to honor a man who died last week who became a legend in his own time in our great State, a legend who was respected by, as we would say, folks on both sides of the aisle. That term for this man means he was respected by Georgia Tech football fans as well as University of Georgia football fans.

The man I am talking about is Larry Munson. Larry Munson was not a southerner by birth, but he became a southerner and Georgia Bulldog by passion. He was the Georgia football announcer for over four decades. During those four decades, he not only witnessed some of the most memorable football games, but he made some of the most memorable calls. His way of describing a football play will go down in the annals of broadcasting as not only being unique, not only being fascinating, but it will go down in the annals of sports broadcasting as being some of the best and most professional calls ever made on a football field.

But there was more to Larry Munson than the "Run, Lindsay, run," more to Larry Munson than the "Oh, you Herschel Walker," more to Larry Munson than "We just stomped on them with a hob-nailed boot." He was a man who had passion for life, a man who had a thorough understanding of his profession, and a man who worked very hard at his profession.

He used to get up every Saturday morning before a football game and have coffee with our legendary coach, Vince Dooley. Coach Dooley said he finally had to stop having coffee with Larry Munson because Larry was ever the pessimist, from a football standpoint. Coach Dooley would come to those coffees feeling good about his chances in the ball game that day, and by the time he finished having coffee with Larry Munson, he had to go back and rewrite his playbook.

Larry Munson was simply a man who loved the University of Georgia. He loved calling football games, and he loved putting his emotions into those calls. He was also a man who cared not just about the University of Georgia but about his students. He used to have what he called a Wednesday night movie night where he would invite students to join him at a theater in Athens, GA, and he would share time—his time—with students that he loved. He did this for years and years and years. I have heard stories from some of those folks who attended those movie nights that Larry Munson was more passionate about movies than he was about University of Georgia football, which is hard to imagine.

As we look back on the life of Larry Munson, those of us who live and breathe Georgia football will always remember the passionate calls, the way he put his heart and soul into the football game, but we will also remember the man Larry Munson, who enjoyed life, enjoyed people, enjoyed his profession, and who gave so much back to his profession.

He was a man who loved the outdoors. He came south from his birthplace of Minneapolis many years ago. He remained a true southerner not just for his 40 years of broadcasting at the University of Georgia but in his bass fishing, for example. I remember when he would come down to our part of the world in south Georgia to speak to a touchdown club, or whatever it may be, and he would always call up and say, "Where is the best bass pond in south Georgia? That is where I want to be this afternoon before my speech." He thoroughly enjoyed the outdoors, and he enjoyed being around people. That was obvious in the way he expressed himself behind the microphone when he called football games.

As we celebrate the life of Larry Munson, we celebrate more than his historic calls. His passion for football, his passion for his family, and his passion for friends exceeds any passion he had for football. He was a great man, a great friend, and he will certainly be missed by our State and particularly by our university.

With that, I yield to Senator ISAKSON.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia, Mr. ISAKSON, is recognized.

Mr. ISAKSON. I appreciate the opportunity to share a few moments with Senator CHAMBLISS on the floor of the Senate to pay tribute to a great Georgian, Larry Munson.

Larry Munson was born in Minneapolis, and after the service he got a scholarship at a broadcasting school, and he got a job at the University of Wyoming. He worked his way to Tennessee, where he announced for the Vanderbilt basketball and football programs. Then, when the Braves moved from Milwaukee to Atlanta, he was brought in to be one of the announcers for Atlanta Braves baseball. Shortly

after that, the voice of the Georgia Bulldogs retired and went to another job, and Larry Munson was asked to take over broadcasting at the University of Georgia. He was a Yankee, an outsider, not one whom many people thought much of when he started. Well, he became a legend in his time. He is a revered person in our State.

It is said that Southeastern Conference football is not a game, it is a religion. In that analogy, if it is a religion in the Southeastern Conference, Larry was the high priest. He was the man whom everybody looked to to make the call nobody else could. The greatest tribute I ever saw to Larry Munson was on SEC football on an afternoon, at 3:30, when, a couple of years ago, before he retired, the announcer for CBS television brought in Larry Munson's radio play by play and set themselves aside because he was that good. He brought the game to life. He brought a spirit to the game you just could not find.

He was a hometown boy. There was no question whom he worked for, no question who signed his ticket. He was always fair but always friendly to the Dogs. It was his spirit that brought the University of Georgia from the doldrums of the 1960s to the height of college football—the national championship in 1980, four SEC championships in the last 12 years, and, hopefully, an SEC championship this Saturday night.

Larry Munson passed away a few days before Thanksgiving in his beloved town and hometown of Athens, GA. Although he started in Minneapolis, MN, and went to Wyoming and later to Tennessee, he finally resided in Georgia, and he died in Georgia. He is esteemed in our State.

On this day, let me, on behalf of the people I represent in my State of all persuasions when it comes to college football, pay tribute to a man who gave every single measure of himself to make sure every person who listened to his voice saw a game, whether they were blind or could see, because he brought life to a game like nobody else could. He was a great Georgian and a great American. He will be missed.

I can promise you this: His view at Stanford Stadium today is far better than the view he used to have in the broadcast booth because he is high over the stadium, where he made his living and where he will always be remembered.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN of Ohio). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAHAM. I believe we are still in morning business.